

SPB

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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WASHINGTON, April 15: David E. Finley, Director, announces the opening of an exhibition of early Italian engravings at the National Gallery of Art on Sunday, April 17th. The last comprehensive exhibition of Italian engravings assembled by Paul Sachs was held in 1915 in the Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard. The present exhibition has been arranged to celebrate the publication, under National Gallery imprint, of the definitive catalogue of Early Italian engravings by Arthur M. Hind, former Keeper of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Mr. Hind has arrived from London for the opening of the exhibition. He will lecture at the Gallery on Sunday, April 17th, at four o'clock.

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Many rare and important Italian prints have been acquired by American museums and collectors since the Fogg exhibition thirty-three years ago. The scope and quality of the exhibition is due to the generous co-operation of The Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Cincinnati Museum; the Cleveland Museum; the Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard; The Metropolitan Museum, New York; the Rhode Island School of Design, and a few anonymous lenders. Also included in the exhibition are a large number of prints from the Rosenwald Collection in the National Gallery of Art.

The exhibition follows the general chronology of Mr. Hind's book. In the first section there are the engravings, mostly anonymous, which were made in Florence from the middle to the end of the fifteenth century; the second part contains engravings made in the north, with Mantegna and the Venetian artists as focal points.

In the first bay of the exhibition gallery there appears one of the earliest known Italian engravings, a Saint Jerome in Penitence, made c. 1450, which was lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Another outstanding rarity, an oval print representing Judith with the Head of Holofernes, was lent by The Art Institute of Chicago. It belongs to a group of engravings, known as the Otto-prints, which were all made in one Florentine workshop. They were intended as decoration for the

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covers of oblong toilet boxes or work boxes for ladies. The Head and Bust of a Man in a Fantastic Helmet from the Rosenwald Collection is an interesting piece which was made c. 1470 under the influence of Pollaiuolo and Verrocchio. The one great plate which Pollaiuolo signed, the Battle of the Naked Men, is also to be seen in an exceptional impression. Finally, in the first section is the large unusual oblong Last Supper by Lucantonio degli Uberti, lent by the Cleveland Museum of Art. The engraving is a copy of a fresco of the Last Supper in the Convent of Saint Onofrio in Florence. This impression, which was formerly in The Ducal Museum at Gotha, is the only complete copy known.

Particular mention should be made of the Mantegna prints. The majestic Risen Christ Between Saints Andrew and Longinus, lent by The Metropolitan Museum, is one of the finest known examples of the subject. All the delicate shading is still present and not worn away as is the case in most impressions. The beautiful Virgin and Child in the rare first state, the Battle of the Sea Gods and the Bacchanal with Silenus are all of exceptional quality.

The work of the two Campagnolas, Jacopo de' Barbari and the enigmatic and curiously modern Master of the year 1515 are all well represented.

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One print of a Doe at Rest by the Master of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist perhaps illustrates better than any other single example, the elusive, graceful spirit of early Italian prints.

The exhibition will close June 19th.

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